



**Parks and Recreation Department Board
Minutes**

**March 12, 2002
Meeting**

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Parks and Recreation Department Board was held on Tuesday, March 12, 2002 at the Zilker Park Clubhouse, 200 Clubhouse Road, off Rollingwood Drive, Austin, Texas.

Board Members Present: Rosemary Castleberry, Rhonda Pratt, Mary Ruth Holder, Pablo Valdez, Jeff Francell, Clint Small and Amy Babich

Board Members Absent: Jeb Boyt

City Staff Present: Jesus M. Olivares, Kimberley Jamail-Mitchell and Dina Haines

A. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Rosemary Castleberry, Chair.

- B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES** February 26, 2002 meeting. **Board Member Pratt** made the motion to approve the minutes as amended. **Board Member Valdez** seconded the motion. **The Board was in favor 5-0-0.**

Board Member Babich arrived at 6:46 p.m.

Board Member Small arrived at 6:55 p.m.

C. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION

Ken Altes, Friends of Seaholm distributed a letter to board member stating his opposition to the final draft Seaholm district master plan and read the letter to the Board Members. He stated that the recommendations in the Master Plan would cost the taxpayers of Austin more money since the option to purchase the land was not addressed in the Seaholm Draft Master Plan. He also discussed the cost of building a parking garage. Building a parking garage would cost more than the cost of purchasing the Lumberman's tract. Mr. Altes recommended that the City of Austin purchase the Lumberman's tract because intensive commercial development here would be incompatible with the public enjoyment of the parkland surrounding the Seaholm plant.

Eric Anderson, Friends of Lance Armstrong Bikeway spoke to the board regarding the possible extension of the Pfluger Bridge over Cesar Chavez Street and the existing Sandra Muraida Way in an elevated structure leading to a proposed green space with an amphitheater. Mr. Anderson stated that the draft final Master Plan would provide a safe and convenient bicycle access across Cesar Chavez with direct linkages to the Lance Armstrong Bikeway and Shoal Creek Trail. Mr. Anderson supports the master plan with the understanding that the current plans may need a little fixing during the implementation.

D. PRESENTATION

Jana McCann, Urban Design Planner, Transportation, Planning and Sustainability Department spoke to the board regarding the final draft Seaholm Master Plan. Ms. McCann spoke of the two options being considered and which would address providing safer and more convenient the bicycle connections Lance Armstrong Bikeway and Shoal Creek Trail. Ms. McCann stated that this master plan if adopted would be considered a “framework” and not a master plan. Once adopted then funding would be discussed for each proposed project.

E. ITEMS FOR ACTION

1. Make a Recommendation to City Council on Seaholm District Master Plan.

Board members stated that they were in favor of some aspects of the final draft Seaholm Master Plan but were concerned about the planned grid of streets in the district the proposed parking garage and the proposed widening of Cesar Chavez Street to six lanes – all of which could have a negative impact on parkland in the district and the hike and bike trail in this vicinity, including on the Green Water Treatment Plant that is supposed to become dedicated parkland if and when it goes offline. Board members also expressed concern about the plan for usage of the Seaholm intake structure as a restaurant with valet service, rather than as an amenity for users of the hike and bike trail. Members noted that this intake structure is already dedicated parkland. PARD Director Olivares explained that Master Plan calls for Class 1 bicycle trails to connect to the Pfluger Bridge. By using this terminology, the bridge and hike and bike trail might become bicycle-only facilities with no pedestrians able to use them. Board Members also expressed concern over the use of the term “Master Plan” on the documents setting out the plan, because “master plan” is a term of art with respect to parklands that means the plan might become set in stone rather than merely serving as a “framework” as Ms. McCann stated. Board members discussed a resolution concerning the final draft Seaholm Plan and worked on making some changes to the language of the resolution drafted following the discussion at the previous board meeting. Board Member Francell stated that he could not support the resolution because he felt there were positive aspects of the final draft Seaholm Plan and the resolution failed to mention those positive aspects. He also expressed concern that without this Plan the Seaholm District might not be revitalized. Board Member Small explained that although there

were positive aspects to the Plan, the overall recommendation was for Council not to adopt or approve of it because of the concerns Board Members had expressed.

Board Member Small made the motion to support the resolution as amended. **Board Member Babich** seconded the motion. The motion passed in favor 6-1-0. Jeff Francell opposed.

Board Chair Castleberry stated at the end of the vote, that the board had voted against the final draft Seaholm Master Plan due to concerns stated by the Members.

(Enclosed Seaholm Resolution)

**Parks and Recreation Board Resolution Concerning Final Draft Seaholm District
Master Plan
March 12, 2002**

WHEREAS, the consultant for the Seaholm District Master Plan, ROMA Design Group, has completed a final draft of the Plan and made it available to the Parks and Recreation Board Members (the Board) and to the public on February 13, 2002; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive plan for the Seaholm District was envisioned in the Town Lake Corridor Study as an "Action Priority" for the corridor which would encourage public/private planning efforts to achieve the goals and policies outlined in the Corridor Study and whereas the Corridor Study, along with the subsequently developed Town Lake Park Comprehensive Plan and Council Ordinance No 890126-P adopting the Town Lake Park Comprehensive Plan, embody the community's overarching goals and policies for the Town Lake Corridor, including the Seaholm District, and interpret the community's goals and policies into a physical plan and strategy to guide actions along the "exceptional resource" that is the Town Lake Corridor; and

WHEREAS the Corridor Study, Comprehensive Plan and Ordinance set forth guiding policies and specific direction with regard to parkland, land use, water quality, zoning, transportation, public access and natural and cultural resources within the Town Lake Corridor that should serve as the basis upon which to create a plan for the Seaholm District and inform decision making for the district; and

WHEREAS a plan for the Seaholm District should expressly acknowledge and support the importance of the Town Lake Corridor as an urban centerpiece that is critical to the quality of life in Austin; discuss the significance of the Seaholm plan to the Corridor; dovetail with the city's goals and policies for the Corridor; identify actions to minimize dependence upon the automobile and maximize pedestrian and bicycle connection, use and safety of the parklands, the hike and bike trail, Lance Armstrong bikeway, Pfluger Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge, the Seaholm building and other public facilities within the district; recommend ways to enhance the use and enjoyment by the public of parkland and other public amenities; provide steps to maintain views and other aesthetic values; and identify opportunities to encourage mixed use development in this portion of the Town Lake Corridor that is focused on recreation, cultural, residential, entertainment and festive retail uses; (these statements are all taken/paraphrased from the Comprehensive Plan); and

WHEREAS the Seaholm District Master Plan amends the Town Lake Park Plan by providing detail about this portion of the Town Lake Corridor and Ordinance No. 890126-P provides in part that "the City Council shall not amend the Town Lake Park Plan until it has held a public hearing and received recommendations on the proposed amendment from the ... Parks and Recreation Board" and the Seaholm District Master Plan is a plan within the meaning of City Code section 2-4-413(B) which gives the Parks

and Recreation Board special responsibilities for providing advice to Council about such plans;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Parks and Recreation Board recommends that the Austin City Council neither approve nor adopt the final draft of the Seaholm District Master Plan for the reasons set forth below:

- the draft plan promotes automobile transportation through the district at the expense of alternative forms of transportation in that it fails to provide for a transportation infrastructure for the district that diminishes the dependence upon the automobile and/or supports and enhances pedestrian and bicycle connection, use and safety of the parklands, the hike and bike trail, Lance Armstrong bikeway by 1.) providing for the extension/reconfiguration into the district of a new grid system of streets bisecting public parklands and the Green Water Treatment Plant site to facilitate greater automobile use and driver convenience (see map on p. 18 and discussion on p. 18-23) 2.) recommending consideration of the realignment and expansion of Cesar Chavez to six lanes with possible HOV lanes likely to require the taking of additional public land along the hike and bike trail and undermining public safety for pedestrians and bicyclists on the hike and bike trail and impeding their safe access to the district from the south and southwest (p.19) and 3.) calling for the reconfiguration of Sandra Muraida Way (p. 19) without disclosing the elevation of the reconfigured street as compared to floodplain, without disclosing whether the staff assertion that the reconfiguration will “add” to parkland is based upon measurement of right of way or asphalt of the existing and reconfigured street, without analyzing the possible relocation of a reconfigured street further to the east and without including any analysis of the added traffic impact of the proposed Lumberman’s Investment Corporation development on Lamar Blvd. and Cesar Chavez;
- the draft plan fails to enhance pedestrian views and aesthetic values by recommending a new grid of streets bisecting the district running north/south to Cesar Chavez and by recommending consideration of the expansion of Cesar Chavez to six lanes with possible HOV lanes (same pages as above);
- the draft plan fails to justify why its parking assumptions and recommendations relate to the reuse of Seaholm as a Science and Technology Museum when its reuse remains undetermined and the Master Plan incorporates the Seaholm Reuse Planning Commission’s recommendation that “the City should remain open to any and all reasonable offers for reuse...” and the Plan further fails to provide a reasonable plan for parking for Seaholm reuse in that it 1.) fails to explain its conclusion that 300 exclusively designated parking spaces along with an additional 220 spaces will be needed for the use of Seaholm as a Science and Technology Museum; 2.) fails to acknowledge that the proposed Seaholm facility parking for 125 cars along the linear road within the Lumberman’s Investment Corporation is not dedicated parking for Seaholm but is proposed to be shared parking with the Lumberman’s Investment Corporation; and 3) proposes

underground parking for the Seaholm facility, but fails to make a commitment that the City will not resort to above ground parking in the “events green” area in case engineering or other surveys conclude that underground parking is not feasible and 4.) provides for 300 surface “interim” parking spaces on the north of the Seaholm facility without explaining when or why these might be needed (p. 14- 15);

- the draft plan includes a recommendation for the use of the Seaholm water intake structure building as a private restaurant with valet service when this structure was dedicated as public parkland and its use must be for a public purpose (a public purpose for this facility might be, for example, a shower-restroom facility or other amenity for users of the hike and bike trail)(p.13);
- the draft plan suggests the decommissioning (without providing any estimated costs of decommissioning the facility) and sale or other conveyance of the Green Water Treatment Plant for private development (p. 32 and 39), although Ordinance No. 890126-P provides that the Green Water Treatment Plant is to become dedicated parkland once it is decommissioned based upon the lack of opportunities to acquire and preserve additional open space for public use in the Town Lake Corridor and the Town Lake Corridor Study contains a policy against the sale or transfer of public land within the Corridor “except where land trades or cash sales advance park and recreation goals” (the draft plan makes no suggestion for how this sale would be used to advance park and recreation goals in the corridor);
- the draft plan recommends the creation of a major new wet pond in the “meadow” between Lamar Blvd. and Sandra Muraida Way to serve as a water quality detention facility without identifying why this wet pond is needed and when a major wet pond is inconsistent with the use of this area for public park and recreational area and may not contribute to overall water quality due to the potential for ponded water to stimulate bacterial growth in an area proposed to be actively used as parkland by the public (p. 16);
- the draft plan fails to identify funding, the decision makers or a timeframe for a decision concerning the Lance Armstrong bikeway through the district and for the extension of the Pfluger Bridge. (p. 24-28)
- the draft plan fails to identify or recommend sources for the very significant funding (estimated to be in between \$34 million to \$40 million) that will be necessary to implement the plan despite economic challenges currently facing the city and the plan does not recommend what interim actions should be taken in what time period based upon the funding requirements.

The Parks and Recreation Board further recommends that the Austin City Council dedicate as parkland the .609 acres in the Sand Beach Reserve area as was contemplated by the settlement agreement entered into between the Lumberman’s

Investment Corporation and the City of Austin on January 8, 2001, in an effort to resolve a long-standing boundary dispute concerning the Sand Beach Reserve parkland.

The Parks and Recreation Board further recommends that the Austin City Council give consideration to acquiring the Lumberman's Investment Corporation tract or development rights to the tract to use the tract to enhance the public use and enjoyment of the Seaholm District.

The Parks and Recreation Board further recommends that the City move forward with the listing of the Seaholm facilities in the National Register of Historic Places making the building eligible for federal historic rehabilitation tax credits and eligible for historic preservation grants.

2. Appoint (1) Parks Board Member to Serve on the Arts & Recreation Sub-Committee.

Board Chair Castleberry appointed Pablo Valdez to serve on the Arts & Recreation Sub-Committee.

F. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Olivares informed the board that Mayor Garcia, Congressman J.J. Pickle, and Lady Bird Johnson have proclaimed April as 'Beautify Your Parks Month.' Various neighborhoods associations are encouraging citizens, along with neighborhood associations to help with 'Clean Sweep Parties' at various parks through out the month of April. First of two events this month will be, March 23, Roy G. Guerrero Colorado River Park. Upcoming Clean Sweep, April 6, will be Town Lake and Festival Beach

Mr. Olivares informed the board of an up coming Dino Pit Prehistoric Garden Grand Opening Event, Saturday, March 30 at 10:00 a.m. at the Garden Center.

Mr. Olivares informed the board of a meeting requested by Old West Austin Neighborhood Association (OWANA) with city council members, Acting Assistant City Manager, Michael McDonald and the PARD Director regarding pet leash free area at Old West Austin Park. At the meeting, March 5, ACM, Michael McDonald proposed that a committee be formed of area residents to try to work out a plan for pets in the park. At this time the residents appear to be evenly split with some opposing and some being in favor of a 'leash free area.' Board Member Francell and Division Manager, Warren Struss were appointed to serve on this committee.

G. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Programs Committee

None

Land and Facilities Committee

The Special Events Policy was discussed at March 5, 2002 meeting.

Navigation Committee

None

H. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Board Member Francell informed the board of an up coming concert event to be held at Waterloo Park and asked about the admission fee for the event in comparison to the amount of general revenue fund money that would be paid to the City.

I. The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.